

EU Calls On Russia to Release Detained Estonian 'Spy'

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BRUSSELS — The European Union has demanded that Moscow release immediately an Estonian security officer who Estonia says was abducted on the border and taken into Russia last week.

Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB, successor to the Soviet KGB, said last Friday that an Estonian officer, identified as Eston Kokhver, had been detained on Russian territory and was being investigated as a suspected spy.

The incident comes at a time of high tension between the EU and Russia over Moscow's involvement in the Ukrainian war.

Estonia and other former Soviet republics in the Baltics, which now belong to both the EU and NATO, have called on both organizations to take a tough stance towards Russia over its actions in Ukraine.

"We are concerned by the abduction on Sept. 5 of Estonian police officer Eston Kokhver by the

Russian security services on Estonian territory near the Estonian-Russian border," an EU spokesman Thursday said in a statement.

"Such action by the Russian Federation runs against international law and the principle of inviolability of borders."

"The EU delegation in Moscow has been in contact with the Russian authorities asking for a swift resolution to the matter. We call for an immediate release of Mr. Kokhver and his safe return to Estonia," the spokesman said.

Estonia said Kokhver was abducted as he tried to stop illegal activity on the border. In recent years, the border has seen a number of incidents involving the smuggling of goods, weapons and migrants.

Russia's FSB said Kokhver had been carrying a Taurus handgun with ammunition, 5,000 euros in cash, special equipment for concealed audio recording and documents that "bear evidence of an intelligence mission."

Russian President Vladimir Putin's declaration in March that he had the right to invade Ukraine to protect Russian speakers there caused alarm in Estonia and Latvia, which have large ethnic Russian minorities.

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